

THE JAMES MOYLE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The James Moyle Oral History Program is partially funded by a generous grant from the James Moyle Genealogical and Historical Association, which was established in 1947 to further genealogical work for the Moyle family and to “do any other worthy act, or perform any other worthy service by means of which the memory of James Moyle and his wives Elizabeth Wood Moyle and Margaret Cannell Moyle will be perpetuated.”

In connection with the final objective mentioned, the Association decided in 1976 to provide a needed service to the Historical Department of the Church (which since June 2000 has been part of the Family and Church History Department) by providing supplemental funding for the department's oral history program, thereby furnishing additional resources for equipment, travel, secretarial and other processing assistance, and other program needs.

One of the larger oral history programs in the United States, the James Moyle Oral History Program has as its primary objective to document, through recorded interviews, the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Interviews are taped not only in areas of Latter-day Saint concentration in the western United States but also in other areas of the world. They are conducted in English as well as many other languages. Those interviewed include Church leaders who have influenced the development of worldwide policies and programs, as well as rank-and-file members of the Church who have experienced the gospel at the local level.

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CHURCH ARCHIVES / FAMILY AND CHURCH HISTORY DEPARTMENT
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

*The
James Moyle
Oral History
Program*

MARY E. SPIRON

Interviewed by Chad M. Orton
Goldsboro, North Carolina
23 October 1990

CHURCH ARCHIVES
JAMES MOYLE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Call number: OH 1328

Interviewee: Mary E. Spiron

This sheet identifies levels of processing for oral histories, with an indication as to what actions are taken at a given level. The box associated with one of these levels has been checked to show how much processing the oral history that follows received.

- ☐ **Rough transcripts.** The interview recording has been transcribed but the transcript has not been checked against the recording and may not be entirely reliable. The transcript serves as a general guide to the content of the interview recording, but the user may wish to listen to all or part of the recording.
 - ☐ **Audit-checked transcripts.** Someone has listened to the interview recording while reading through the transcript to correct typographical errors and, to the extent possible, fill in gaps where the typist could not hear or understand given words or larger portions of text.
 - ☒ **Edited transcripts.** One or more persons have reviewed the oral history, which was previously audit-checked, for spelling, sentence and paragraph divisions, readability, and general editorial style, as well as to correct errors that had been overlooked or introduced during previous processing steps. In doing so, the editor(s) sought to preserve the informational content and speech patterns of the oral history.
 - ☐ **Edited transcripts reviewed by the persons interviewed.** Following transcription, audit-checking, and editing, a copy of the oral history has been sent to the person(s) interviewed for review, with the interviewer bearing the responsibility for deciding which, if any, of the changes suggested have been incorporated into the transcript that follows.
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INTERVIEWEE: Mary E. Spiron

INTERVIEWER: Chad M. Orton

DATE: 23 October 1990

O: Today is the 23rd of October 1990. This is Chad Orton. I am in the stake center in Goldsboro, North Carolina. I'm talking to Sister Mary Spiron, a long-time member of the Church here in Goldsboro. In addition, she runs the family history center library here, and as time permits, she's also working on a history of the Goldsboro Stake. You mentioned before—maybe we'll begin here and then go back and pick up your life—about the chapel that we are meeting in and about how we got the land for this.

S: I'll give you some background first. My husband is not a member of the Church. He's the type of person that once he gets in the house and pulls his shoes off, that's it. He doesn't go out any more.

We were looking at a new place to build a chapel. We had outgrown the chapel on Ash Street, so they went out and bought a piece of property out on what's Highway 70 now. It bordered with the railroad tracks. After they'd made their purchase, they found out that they were going to build a granary right across from where the church was going to be built. They were very unhappy about it. They came back up the highway over to where this housing development is. It's a real nice development, but you can't see it from the highway: Handley Acres, up on the hill. It's kind of an exclusive development. It's secluded from the highway. The man wanted twenty-five thousand dollars for four acres of land.

This will give you a testimony of doing your home teaching. On Monday night, the home teachers came to see us. Billy asked, "Have you found you another piece of land yet?" They told us about the piece of property up at Handley Acres. My husband was

addicted to television—if anything ever went wrong with it, he'd jump up immediately and start to fix it. On Wednesday night, two nights later, all of a sudden the television just went black. He reached over, got his shoes, put his shoes on, and said, "Let's go get some ice cream." We got out to the highway. You turn right to go to the ice cream parlor, and you turn left to go to his step-daddy's country store. We had two children at that time.

He stopped and said: "Let's stop and take a vote on which way we're going to go. [Do we go] get the ice cream or go talk to John?" The boys voted to go get the ice cream. I said, "Let's go to the station." This is the second miracle. He went my way. We went to the station. We got down there, and this friend of mine said, "Mary, have ya'all got your piece of property yet?" I said: "No, but they're looking at one." He said, "I've got the very thing you need." He goes out to his car and gets this map and shows me. I told him we had the option on four acres of land for twenty-five thousand dollars. He said, "I'll give you four acres for fifteen thousand, and let you pick it out from anywhere in this tract of land that you want." We went back home—by then it was about nine o'clock—and I called Brother [Hubert] Beasley, who was the branch president at that time. He called President [Elbert] Aycock, who was the district president, and he called President [Henry A.] Smith, the mission president. They closed the deal that Saturday, in one week's time. When President Smith came down, all this was farmland. All of it was just a huge cornfield. There was just a two-lane road out there at that time.

O: Where Highway 70 is now?

S: Where Highway 70 is it was just a two-lane road. He walked all over the place, then he came back to the backside and said this is the place you want to choose. Everybody was sort of disappointed because we thought it should have gone out on the highway, but look where we'd be today if we were sitting out there now. Every single thing just fell right in line. The next day, when Billy looked at the television, it was a fifteen cent tube that had blown out. There's no way you can convince me that the Lord didn't have a hand in it.

Handley Acres is now fenced off. We'd have to go way out a ways and circle around to get back down in there. Plus, when the man sold us the four acres, he gave us two acres, so we got six acres of land for fifteen thousand.

O: That's a good deal.

S: The moral of the story is do your home teaching. [laughing]

O: You've convinced me. I'd better do it when I get back.

S: Absolutely.

O: I appreciate you sharing that story with us. We've talked about several things prior to this. Maybe we can begin by just having you recount again on tape how it is that you

came to be a member of the Church, particularly your grandmother's and your parents' conversions.

S: The missionaries started visiting in the home of my grandparents. My granddaddy was very friendly to the Church until the day my mother and her brother and her mother went to be baptized. This was 1908. When they got home from being baptized, his attitude changed. From then on, he did not want the missionaries to come visit. Every time they went to Church—from then on as long as he lived—they would get back home and all the doors and all the windows but one would be locked. He made it appear that he accidentally forgot to lock this one, because it was always a different one. Anyway, they remained faithful. My uncle died in 1918 with the flu epidemic. My mother and grandmother were faithful from then on, regardless of the consequences. Like I said, after my mother married, she more or less took over the functions of the branch then for so long. We were just a Sunday School to start with.

O: Did they ever talk to you about what it was about Mormonism that attracted them and made them want to get baptized?

S: No, with the exception that my grandmother. Can you cut that thing off?

O: Maybe I can condense the story that you just told about your grandmother. Because of situations growing out of the events surrounding the war between the States, they were forced to move into this area. Her teachings were then mainly based out of the Bible because she could not go to school.

S: Right, and when the missionaries came along, she knew her scriptures well enough to recognize the truth when she heard it, and she grasped it right then. I know that the Lord had a hand in her coming here and her meeting the missionaries. Three times my mother's life was spared when there was no way of her living under normal circumstances. I think that her life was spared for the part that she was going to play in the Church and for bringing her children up in the Church.

O: You mentioned earlier that your mother played a prominent role in the branch here. I guess it was Sunday School at that time.

S: Sunday School started it off.

O: Could you just elaborate on that a little?

S: She had to organize everything that was done. She directed the music. She taught Sunday School. She was the Relief Society president. Whatever needed to be done, they called on her to do it.

O: Was there no one else that could do this or would do this?

- S: They just did not have the talent at that particular time that we needed.
- O: How many members?
- S: I can't give you the numbers, but you saw the picture with most of them on the doorsteps of the Church there. That was it, practically. When they first started off, they met in a home, in Brother Moren's home. The Moren Family married into the Gwaltney Family, which was my family. Part of the Moren and Mishley Family went West, but they were meeting in the home of this Brother Moren. He lived out on William Street. His farm was just down the street there. He gave a lot out of his peach orchard to build the little chapel. The members just built it by hand. Labor from the members is where they got that first little chapel from.
- O: That was the wooden structure that you also have a picture of.
- S: Right. They just started that little Sunday School meeting in the home and then developed into the chapel. I'll have to look up time periods and so forth, but Virgil Froggel [sp?] was, I think, the very first Sunday School president they had.
- O: The local members were in charge of the Sunday School, not the missionaries.
- S: It was the local members. Up until the 1940s, the missionaries were like the district president. The missionaries were in charge of the area.
- O: They traveled quite a bit?
- S: Right. A lot of times they would put off the baptisms until the missionaries came through, then they'd baptize everybody. This Brother Price that I was telling you about, he was like our presiding elder, but he was not the president of the district.
- O: He was just overseeing the group here.
- S: He was our only elder around, so they called him the presiding elder.
- O: You showed me a picture that had several other men. They weren't elders, they were priests or teachers or deacons, is that right?
- S: I'm not sure. I'll have to go back and tell you when they were ordained elders. At the beginning, you had to go through the steps of the priesthood—deacon, teacher, priest—and you had to be a priest for a long time before they would let you be an elder.
- O: Did your father join the Church?
- S: Yes.

O: Did he also join here in Goldsboro?

S: Yes.

O: How did he come into the Church?

S: He joined the Church through my mother.

O: They were married by then.

S: Yes.

O: You were raised as a Latter-day Saint. What was your home life like?

S: I was raised by my mother. My daddy left home when I was six-years-old. They were divorced when I was eight. I never had the influence of a father in my home, really, but my grandmother was there. She's the one that we went to for all our . . . She was a story teller, and until I was grown, I couldn't separate Aesop's Fables from Bible stories. She just intertwined them. Everything that she wanted to teach you came from stories. She never reprimanded you about anything. She would just tell you a little story to get her point across. You knew that you had done wrong and not to do that again. She was the one we leaned to as far as scriptures and Bible stories and so forth.

The circumstances were so different then they are now. It was all my mother could do to keep up. She had to work full-time. She walked five miles a day to work and back. She also kept a big garden. We canned all our vegetables and so forth to put up for the winter. She took time to make sure that we were doing what we were supposed to be doing in the Church. She took time for her Sunday School lessons and to prepare us. But my grandmother, [Fann?], was our surrogate mother. At that time, we would have two and a half minute talks in Church. Our grandmother made sure that each one of us had prepared a two and a half minute talk for Sunday, because if the person assigned was not there, they asked for volunteers. One of us was expected to volunteer. I really had the influence of the Church from those two people, my mother and grandmother.

O: Now did your grandmother live with you?

S: Yes.

O: Were you baptized when you were eight?

S: Yes.

O: Where were you baptized?

- S: At Cogdell's Pond [sp?]. It's out on Highway 70 going to Raleigh. It's just a little old fishpond. There's a little river prior to the fishpond, and we used the little river.
- O: What do you remember about your baptismal service?
- S: Everything. Like I said, we saved up the baptisms, so there were several of us to be baptized that day. Some were older. One boy, they couldn't get him under. Every time, something would pop up, and they had to try again. I got so scared, I said, "I know they're going to drown him. Sure as the world, they're going to drown him." So I ran, and I hid. It was in a wooded area. I got very small and very quiet, and they had to find me. [laughing] A cousin finally found me that was grown, and she bribed me to go back. At that time, a nickel was big money, so she gave me a nickel to go back and be baptized. That was a traumatic occasion in my life.
- O: It sounds like it. Did the branch members come out?
- S: One of those pictures I showed you was of our baptisms. Everybody went.
- O: It was a big affair.
- S: A big event. Yes.
- O: You were one of the few Mormons, weren't you?
- S: Yes.
- O: How were the Mormons viewed at that time?
- S: My very best friend lived a mile from me. We were friends at school, we walked home together, but I could not go in her yard or in her house, and she could not come to my house. We could not be friends except at school, because her family was so bitter against the Church.
- O: Were there other instances? In some places they talk about how rocks were thrown at Mormons and things like that. Did you ever experience any of that?
- S: I never did, but when our chapel on Frank Street wanted to hold a conference, I do not remember this, but mamma said they had scheduled a store building to hold the conference in. The neighborhood told the man that they would never trade with him again if he allowed the Mormons to meet in his building. They went to the lumber yard and then went out under these big oak trees and built benches for the people to sit on.
- O: They held their meeting outdoors.

- S: Yes. Then they advanced from that to the courthouse. I remember holding conferences in the courthouse.
- O: These conferences, were they district conferences?
- S: You can call it district, but people came from all the eastern part of the state. At that time when I was growing up, we went from Raleigh to Harkers Island, from the Virginia line down to the South Carolina line.
- O: What do you remember about these conferences?
- S: During the earliest conferences, we had a lady that made applejacks. You don't know what an applejack is, apple pies, as you would call them, the fried pies. There was a group of us that always got right in front of her applejacks and her bananas. She always brought bananas, and they were hard to come by then. The minute they said amen from the blessing, we all kind of swarmed. That was one of my earliest memories of the conferences.
- O: Between the meetings, you'd get together and eat, is that what you're saying?
- S: Right. They had morning session, a spread lunch, then evening session, and then we'd go back for another meeting at night.
- O: Everybody would just bring something for the meal.
- S: The biggest spread you've ever seen in your life.
- O: You'd have the afternoon meeting then another in the evening.
- S: Right.
- O: Would you have another spread between those other two meetings?
- S: No. Usually the people that were going a distance, they would all scatter off and go home. It was mainly the local people that went back at night.
- O: You mentioned going to Sunday School. Did you also hold sacrament service every week?
- S: By the time I grew up, we were.
- O: As a child though?
- S: Yes. They were holding it every week.

O: What was that like?

S: We'd freeze in the winter and burn up in the summer.

O: Is that right?

S: Much of the time Brother Shaw and Brother King were the only two priesthood holders there, and they would bless the sacrament, then pass it, and then talk. Our sacrament was served in the little shot glasses.

O: You had individual cups.

S: By then. I remember that so well because we had to carry those things a mile and a half home and wash them and bring them back every week. But before that, before I can remember, they just had the one glass. My grandmother said that there was this one lady that had a whole line of children, and they always had a cold. She would always watch to see where they were going to sit, and then she would position herself so she would get the glass first, before it got to them. By the time I could remember, they had done away with the one glass.

O: Would it just be these men who spoke, or would the women also speak?

S: They'd rotate with the women, but there were not that many women to speak. I can only remember my grandmother and my mother talking as a child growing up. There were not too many people to draw from.

O: Did you, in these meetings, have a piano and someone who could play it?

S: Yes. My sister played the piano, and my mother directed music for twenty-five years.

O: In addition to every thing else, she directed the music?

S: Yes.

O: Who were some of the stalwart members as far as families?

S: The Waltons and the Morens [sp?]. The Cogdell [sp?] Family came in later as we drew people from Nahunta. The Nahunta Branch had their own little Sunday School, but they would come in on special occasions. The Aycock Family, the Harper Family, and the Maples Family, which were intermarried with each other. On down the road, the Cogdell Family turned into the Carr Family. That was a large family. The King Family, Brother Salmon King, that was this faithful member; he only had one son that was productive in the Church. That son divorced his wife, so none of his family was ever active in the Church. That's all. Just a name now and then. People of any size, that was it. There was also the Folsom [sp?] Family, but they left when I was about twelve-years-old.

O: You mentioned early about Relief Society and how your mother was Relief Society president. You weren't involved in Relief Society, but do you remember anything about the Relief Society during those early days?

S: Yes. They met in the women's homes. The Relief Society also started the building fund. They had a bazaar every year for the building fund, and we put on plays and would go around to places like Albertson and Howard's Chapel branches to put on plays for the building fund. We did not charge for the play, but we had a box lunch, and the girls would carry the box lunch. They would auction off the box lunch to the boys to eat with the girls. That's the way they made money with the plays.

O: These were teenage girls.

S: Yes.

O: Were these plays a whole branch affair?

S: A whole branch affair. A good time. We didn't make very little money, but we had a good time.

O: What were some of the plays that you put on, do you remember?

S: I can't remember, but I can tell you about one of the plays. I was so small. My brother and I were both in the play. It was a family sitting at the dinner table. My brother was to ask the blessing, and he said, "Amen-and-pass-the-peas," just that quick. In the script of the play, he asks my mother—she was the mother in the play—"Do I have halitosis?" That was a brand new word. That was the first time I'd ever heard that word. I couldn't forget it. This Brother King, every time I went to practice, he never knew the script, but the night it came to put on the play, he knew everything perfect. My mamma just about had a nervous breakdown because she just knew he would never learn it, but he always did.

O: Were these plays done under the direction of the Relief Society?

S: My mother. She ordered the plays. She got up the cash. She did everything. On Mother's Day, we always had a real big Mother's Day program, and she was also in charge of that.

O: Did they have Primary? Was that functioning?

S: Not when I was Primary age. The first Primary: I was around maybe twelve when we started having Primary in the home of Brother Sherwood's daughter. They got us to be teachers.

- O: They got you as a twelve-year-old to be the teacher.
- S: Yes, but we really did not have the formal lessons. Later on the *Children's Friend* started coming, and we started getting the *Children's Friend* with printed lessons in it. Then we advanced from that.
- O: What did you use for lessons then?
- S: It's too far back. I can't remember that. But I can remember that as we advanced to where we got on Ash Street and started having Primary on a regular basis, by then we had the *Children's Friend*. I remember when I was counselor and the new president came in and said that we could no longer use the *Children's Friend* for our lessons, I just about flipped out. I thought, "What in the world are we going to do?" They didn't say they were going to send us lessons.
- O: You missed out on Primary, but did they have Mutual?
- S: Yes. Everybody.
- O: For everybody?
- S: Everybody went to Mutual every Wednesday night.
- O: What did you do at Mutual?
- S: We had a lot of activities, and we had lessons. Here's where the elders came in to play a lot. They would take care of the lessons or entertainment, and so forth.
- O: What kind of activities? Was there anything that was a favorite activity of the branch?
- S: We enjoyed things that the teenagers now would think were very boring games.
- O: Such as?
- S: Sack races, musical chairs, a game we called "Peter, James, and John," things like that. Teenagers now you couldn't get one to participate in anything like that, but we really enjoyed it.
- O: Were there other kids your age when you were in Mutual?
- S: Yes. My brother is a year older than I am, and my sister is five years older. Then I had a cousin a year younger. This girlfriend of my was a year older. There were like five of us that were practically the same age, about a year's difference. Then you skipped on down about four years, and then you had another little group of about half a dozen. And that was it.

- O: Of these five, they were all basically your family.
- S: Yes. If it was not family, they were so close that they would call my mother Aunt Birdie, and I called their mother Aunt Claude. It was like family.
- O: There would have been very little opportunity, then, in this branch, to marry within the Church.
- S: Right. Very little at that time that I was growing up. There just wasn't anybody. There was no transportation to get around then like they have now. The only district events we had was like the Gold and Green Ball, when I was about seventeen or eighteen. By then they had the Gold and Green Ball once a year. There was nothing else in between that where the young people could meet. You were so close to the ones in your little old branch, why, you'd have thought you were marrying in your family. It was my brother, my cousin, and then Elders Jones [sp?]. He was seventeen when he got married, but he was so close. He was like a cousin, too. That's the reason these three cousins I had left and went West. The Mincheys [sp?] went West, and then they got these cousins of mine to go West. All of the Maples' girls out at Nahunta also went West. That was the reason.
- O: So they could find someone in the Church?
- S: Yes. Greener pastures.
- O: Did your mother and grandmother ever think about going West?
- S: Yes. My grandpa got drunk, [laughing] and he decided he was going to sell the farm and move to Utah. He got sober, and he decided he didn't want to go to Utah. But in the meantime, he'd sold the farm. Then he went the whole winter, grandmother said, looking for another farm that he liked and couldn't find one. He went back and bought half his farm back for the same amount of money that he sold it for.
- O: But there was somewhat of that desire?
- S: Yes.
- O: This just wasn't a joke on his part, there was some desire?
- S: On granddaddy's part? No. I think he was just drunk. My grandmother, yes. But the opportunity just did not present itself.
- O: But if it had, they may have gone to Utah.
- S: Right. My granddaddy never joined the Church. Like I said, he was always against the fact once they were baptized.

- O: Were they being counseled that they ought to stay here in North Carolina?
- S: Not then. No. I know the Church as a whole told people in the 1890s to start staying where they were. But the missionaries, all the time, every new missionary that came by, were always after the members to go West. They did that as individuals and not as the Church.
- O: In a lot of ways part of the reason why maybe the Church didn't grow is because the converts they made would just replace those who were moving to Utah, if you understand what I'm getting at.
- S: The more faithful ones went to Utah. This Cogdell Family that I was telling you about, practically everyone of those people went West. There were only two left here. One joined the Church and the other one did not.
- O: I'm surprised that you said that the more "faithful ones" went West. Your family seemed to be faithful.
- S: That might have been a bad choice of words. The more faithful ones that had the opportunity went West. There was a little nucleus of faithful ones that stayed here, but the members of families that stayed here were not active in the Church. That's what I'm talking about.
- O: As these converts came into the Church, do you remember if there were traditions that were carried over from the Baptists and Methodists?
- S: Don't forget the Holiness.
- O: Or the Holiness?
- S: Yes. At the pulpit in particular, when they were praying and preaching. They just stood out like a sore thumb, the Holiness background did, especially.
- O: The animation.
- S: Yes. And the vain repetition, if you're familiar with the Holiness religion and how they use the Lord's name so much.
- O: You mentioned you taught Primary.
- S: Yes.
- O: What other jobs have you held?

- S: The first one that I remember, officially, was secretary in the Mutual.
- O: You would keep the minutes and the roll, is that what you would do?
- S: Yes. I was just a child then.
- O: When you say "child," how old?
- S: Twelve to fourteen.
- O: You did this in addition to teaching Primary?
- S: Primary was not Primary as we know it today. It was gathering the children together and telling them stories and playing games with them. That was Primary back then.
- O: Would you do that every week?
- S: No. Not always. We worked into a weekly Primary, but it did not start that way.
- O: Would nonmembers come to this?
- S: Yes. Anybody could come that wanted to. The problem back then at that time period was that the nonmembers were not that friendly towards the Church. Then I went from that [Primary] to being secretary to the Relief Society. I taught the gospel class about eight years. I was district Primary president, then we were made a stake, and I was stake Primary president. I was stake or district Primary president for seven or eight years. I was in the music for twenty-five years. When they decided they wanted a meetinghouse library and got the word down to start a meetinghouse library without any kind of guidelines whatsoever, they just told me to set up the library. I was in that around seven years before I was released. I've taught everywhere except in the Young Women's program or the MIA [Mutual Improvement Association]. I never in taught in that.
- O: As you were talking earlier, you talked about how you went to Mutual during the week and went to Church twice on Sunday. How often would you go to the Church during an average week?
- S: At least three times. For us and for most people there, it was like a mile or a mile and a half. For us and most of the ones that went, it was about a mile and a half. It was a long walk.
- O: Was it something you looked forward to, going to the church?
- S: Yes. There was a lot of socializing going on because the members were a clan. The thing we had the most opposition, I think, with nonmembers, was that everybody was brainwashed to think that all Mormons had seven wives. That was the thing that hit you

all the time. That's the reason that this girlfriend's family didn't want their daughter to socialize with me. Everybody in our neighborhood, even my daddy's family, were Holiness. Missionaries, not knowing, said, being facetious, "Yes, we have seven wives." This one particular missionary told my uncle when he asked them about the seven wives, "No, you can have all the law allows." The law allowed one, but my uncle didn't stop to figure that out. He interpreted that as saying, "You can have all you want."

My granddaddy and grandmother on my daddy's side cannot read. My mother read the newspaper, the magazines, everything except the Bible. She was not allowed to read the Bible in that house to them, because, they said, she just didn't understand how to read the Bible. But it was because there were just so many rumors. They were afraid of the Church. A lot of it was just innocent remarks that were made and then blown up, like this uncle of mine. He spread everywhere, you know about the wives, because of this off-handed remark the missionary said. The missionary, I'm sure, thought that everybody knows the law doesn't allow you to have but one wife, but it didn't work out that way.

O: Going to Church then was kind of a refuge from all this.

S: Right. You got together with somebody that had the same thing in common that you had.

O: Did the Church play a more prominent role in your life as you were growing up than you see it playing in the lives of the children now?

S: Yes. We didn't have anywhere to go except to Church and school when I was growing up. As I got to be around fifteen-, sixteen-years-old, you could go to the movie, but before that, there was no where else to go. Now the kids have so many things to entertain them and so many places to go, they haven't got time to go to Church.

O: Did most of the members in the branch hold jobs? People were willing to take jobs weren't they?

S: About half.

O: The other half wouldn't?

S: Or not capable. One or the other. Either they would not or were not capable.

O: When you say that they were not capable, how do you mean that?

S: They couldn't read sufficient, or they couldn't speak. They couldn't get up in front of people. We had such a few adults. You kind of caught me off guard, because I have to think back and try to remember. My grandmother was a good speaker and mamma was, but, like I told you before, they were the only two women that I remember ever talking in Church. Of course, they taught the Sunday School classes. Brother Shuler [sp?] taught a class, and Brother King taught a class. I guess we were divided pretty well half and half,

if you don't count children, for half our membership was children. If you do, then maybe two-thirds participated.

O: Part of the reason we have jobs is that it's to be a learning experience. I was wondering if there was something that had enveloped to the point, where they had seen maybe the missionaries or other people behave, and they were so fearful of being judged against that standard. Was that feeling evident?

S: If it was, I was not aware of it.

O: Were there problems in the branch? Was there any contention?

S: I don't remember there being any. My feeling is that in my growing up time, we were about as tight a knit group of people as you could find.

O: Part of that was probably because of the reaction against the Church?

S: Yes. They had to stick together.

O: How was the Word of Wisdom viewed?

S: Part of the members kept it and part of them did not. I'm not going to mention any names, but one of the ladies would have her tea and coffee. When she saw the missionaries coming down the road, she put it all away. She wouldn't use it in front of them. My grandmother, she never did quit dipping snuff. She was taught to dip snuff when she was three-years-old. When she was growing up, the chimneys were made with mud in between the sticks in the chimneys. She said the adults taught the children to dip snuff so they wouldn't eat the mud. Now a days we know there was a vitamin deficiency that made them want to eat the mud, but they were taught that as children.

My grandmother never thought that there was anything wrong with dipping snuff, because this Brother Price did not live the Word of Wisdom, and he'd perform miracles right and left, and he was a presiding elder of the Church. In the Bible, where it says it's not what goes in the mouth but what comes out of the mouth, that was the scripture that she based it on, that it was not what you took in. My mother was strict, very stick in the Word of Wisdom. She taught it to all of us. My grandmother taught it to all of us, not because she thought it was sinful as much as she thought it was a dirty habit. She said it was just a dirty habit. I was married before they started really not baptizing a person that was not living the Word of Wisdom.

O: What are we talking, age-wise?

S: I was around twenty-years-old, and they were still baptizing a person that was not living the Word of Wisdom.

- O: I never asked you when you were born.
- S: I was born in 1926. Around 1945 or 1946 I remember some that were still baptized that were not keeping the Word of Wisdom.
- O: Did the branch continue throughout that time until you were married in that little old building?
- S: No. We left that building during World War II. I can't tell you the year.
- O: Why did you leave it?
- S: We just felt like we needed to get out of there. It was a bad environment to start with. The neighborhood was not a good neighborhood. We felt like we needed a larger place—that was the number one reason—and a better neighborhood. We went from that building to meeting in halls downtown. There were three different halls downtown: Woodman of the World, VFW. [Veterans of Foreign Wards], and then another hall that the Seventh-day Adventists rented and used on Saturday and we rented it on Sunday. All this time, our building fund was going on. Then we built the Church over on Ash Street.
- O: This is what you were raising money for with the plays and all of that.
- S: And bazaars. We had bazaars and bake sales. Every fall we'd have a big bake sale.
- O: Did you get involved in the construction of the building itself?
- S: Yes.
- O: You personally?
- S: Yes, driving nails.
- O: Did you do anything else on it?
- S: Just the driving nails.
- O: Did it make a difference to have a better meeting hall?
- S: Yes. That's when we started getting more converts. Our membership starting picking up a lot because the people started seeing us in a different light. I think people were, by then, not quite as afraid of the Church and its members. There was one thing, when we were building that building and they started building the cultural hall, there was not a Church in Goldsboro that had anything except a sanctuary. When we started building a cultural hall, it was all over town that the Mormons were building this big dance hall onto

the Church. We got a lot of criticism for that. Now, I guess, practically every Church in the county has a fellowship hall built onto it.

O: Is that right?

S: Yes. [laughing] Not only that, some of them have come out to look at our floor plan and pattern theirs after ours. At the particular time this was going on, there was nothing for the young people in the other churches. They've gradually adopted a youth program in all the churches.

O: That's still going on today?

S: Yes. Just as recent as last year, one of the board of directors, or whatever they call themselves, from the Free Will Baptist Church came over to look at our floor plan here.

O: When you got this new building and you got into the better light, basically, in the community, you said baptisms grew. Was the growth rapid or was it slow?

S: It was not a large increase at one time. It was not a rapid growth. It was kind of a steady growth, once we decided that we needed to advance bigger and better. We had a building out at Nahunta, a building out a Grantham, and then one in Goldsboro. They could not carry on the full program of the Church, so the mission president suggested they consolidate the three churches. That way we had enough people to carry on the full program of the Church. Our memberships then increased even more rapidly.

O: About ten years later, you built this building we're in.

S: No, it was longer than ten years.

O: Twelve, thirteen, somewhere in there?

S: Right.

O: Again, did you have to have fundraisings to build this building?

S: Yes. We were on the 70/30 [building fund program]. My husband hauled those huge rafters in the chapel. He hauled that and didn't charge. A lot of people donated labor. They'd donate so much in labor, regardless of what your labor consisted of. You could be a gopher or you could come out and do the hammer and nail deal.

O: You could do that in lieu of donating money.

S: Yes. I was going to tell you one thing while I was thinking about it. The first black person that I know of that joined the Church in eastern North Carolina, anyway, was from this area.

O: From Goldsboro itself?

S: He actually lived in Sampson County. We always started off with a small Sunday School, but this man—and I can't remember how he found out about the Church—would come to all our conferences. He was converted to the Church through coming to conference. At that time, we held conference at the courthouse. He said that he got acquainted with one of our members that lived out of town toward Sampson County. He told her he would never come to any of the meetings because he did not want to cause any problems. But he was taught by the missionaries and was baptized. Just as soon as the Church said that you could have the work done for the blacks, I got in touch with one of the missionaries that was here and that had helped to teach him, and he did his temple work for him.

O: I think I understand, but when you say he didn't want to come out to meetings because he didn't want to cause problems, what do you mean exactly?

S: He didn't want to come to the building, because of the racial tension. I don't think he would have had any problem at the church. I didn't know, and he didn't know, so he wouldn't try it. When they did put in integration, it was maybe a half a dozen out of this great big area that didn't like the idea of blacks coming to Church.

O: The Revelation on the Priesthood was fairly well accepted here?

S: Right.

O: Are there black members here in Goldsboro?

S: Yes. Just a few.

O: You were district Primary president and later stake Primary president. Was your husband pretty supportive of this?

S: Yes. He has always been supportive.

O: That would have taken you away from the home for quite a while.

S: Right.

O: What did you do as district Primary president?

S: When I was district Primary president, we went from Goldsboro to Harkers Island, down to the South Carolina border. That was the area that we covered. We did an awful lot of traveling trying to get the Primaries together, people organized, introduce new materials, and so forth.

- O: This would have been during the week on a weekday.
- S: Right. President [Cecil] Reese's wife was one of my counselors. I don't know if you met her or not.
- O: No, I didn't. Would you take your kids with you?
- S: Once in a while it was a necessity, but ordinarily, we would get somebody to keep the children. We'd be gone all day.
- O: Was the Primary program functioning fairly well in all these units?
- S: Not in all of them, but we made a lot of progress.
- O: You were able to add Primary to a few units that didn't have it before?
- S: Yes. We got them organized and going, following the Church program in Primary.
- O: Were there some that were holding Primary prior to that who were not following the program?
- S: Yes.
- O: In what regards?
- S: They really didn't know how to do a lot of things. We had a lot of workshops for the people to teach them just how to mount the materials, how to use their visual aides, and carry out the program.
- O: In 1961, the stake was organized. What were your feelings upon the organization of the stake?
- S: I was very happy.
- O: Did you ever think you'd see the day when it would come?
- S: No. I never visualized that we would be where we are now.
- O: Did it change people's perception of the Church to be a stake as opposed to a district?
- S: I think so.
- O: How?

- S: We just felt like we had progressed. We were more willing to work harder and go further.
- O: Was there a feeling that you were no longer second-class citizens? I don't know if that's the right wording, but did you feel you were at least equal with the Church out in Utah, or wherever, because you were a stake?
- S: I don't think it's that, as much as it is being equal with the community.
- O: How's that?
- S: We've got a nicer church than anybody around, now. People are beginning to sit up and take notice. They don't look down on you any more like they did when we were struggling all those many years. It feels like we're equal with them.
- O: And that's more important than being equal with the Church in Utah?
- S: I can only speak for myself. Because we've had the full program of the Church, I feel like we are just as well off Church-wise and program-wise as anybody in Utah. Since we got the full program of the Church, I've never felt inferior. We've had an awful lot of people from out there try to make us feel inferior, but we don't listen to them.
- O: The people that come out here, make that suggestion?
- S: All the time. Even the servicemen. Not just the missionaries but even the servicemen. Cut that off.
- O: A lot of people I've talked to have mentioned this attitude among a lot of Westerners in general, Utahans in specific, this "better than everybody else" type of an attitude.
- S: It is. It shows.
- O: Does it present a problem as far as doing missionary work to have this cocky Westerner coming out here?
- S: Maybe not as much with the missionary work as it does with the members. We don't get that as much with the missionaries as we do—I'm speaking for this area right here—with the boys stationed at the base who are going to be put in to hold positions in the ward, wives holding positions in the Relief Society and then bad-mouthing the area, and so forth. With the missionaries, I don't think it really presents a problem. We can just tell them where to get off and go on.
- O: In Washington and Chicago, for a while, the saying was you could tell who the next bishop would be because he was the last one who got off the train from Utah. Do you

find this among the bishops and the leadership, that they're Westerners, or are they mainly native Southerners?

S: In Second Ward, it's mainly Westerners, because they're the young servicemen from the base. They keep things going over there. In fact that whole ward is almost made up of retired people and service people. That's what they have to choose from, the very elderly or the servicemen, so naturally a lot of those service people, Westerners, are going to get in leadership positions. To answer your question, as hard as Elbert Aycock worked to build this area, and then when we were made a stake . . .

O: They called someone from Utah to be the stake president.

S: Yes.

O: Did that create some hard feelings among the members?

S: A lot. A lot of hurt feelings that are still hurt. A lot of hard feelings. It really did. And that's been how long ago?

O: Nearly thirty years.

S: The ones that were so upset and hurt over it, we're dying out, and the younger generation coming up don't know about it.

O: It was mainly among the older members.

S: They knew how hard he had worked to pull us up out of that ditch we were in.

O: Not only how hard he worked, but how hard they had worked.

S: Right.

O: I appreciate you adding that.

S: He [Cecil Reese] probably didn't mention that because nobody went to him. It was talking among ourselves. We were talking among ourselves. Nobody confronted him with it, so maybe he never did hear about it. But hearing, seeing, and feeling you can feel the coolness; the wall that's there. He had to get the message whether anybody said it to him or not.

O: Do things such as having a temple in the South help change that perception?

S: Yes. So much. Especially for people in this area that go to Washington a lot. A lot of people in this area go to Washington and see the temple. It's made a good impression on them.

- O: There were three things in the 1960s, three big issues, and maybe you can comment on what effect, if any, they had here in Goldsboro. The first one was the hippy movement. Did that have any effect here?
- S: It really didn't reach us or effect us that much.
- O: The second one is Vietnam. These air bases and that were functioning. Did it have any effect upon either people stationed here or members being drafted and going into the service?
- S: Yes. We had a lot of people moving in and out of the ward as a result of that.
- O: I read recently in the *Church News* where the bishop of the Second Ward, and I don't know how many others, had been transferred to Saudi Arabia. I didn't know if that was a similar situation.
- S: Yes. It was the same way. Our bishop was over in Vietnam for months, six months, I think it was, that he was gone. He was never released.
- O: The ward just carried on without him.
- S: Yes.
- O: The last one was the civil rights movement, particularly with the policy in the Church of blacks and the priesthood. Did that have any repercussions here in Goldsboro?
- S: Like I said a while ago, I only know of about six people who were against mixing with black. But rumors will get started, and people get scared. They were having big demonstrations all around us. The word was they were going to have a big demonstration here, and they were going to come in large groups to the different churches. But it never panned out. It was about a half a dozen members that said they were just not going to have that. They didn't go along with that at all. It really did not affect us that much.
- O: These were members who were going to protest the Church's policy?
- S: They were not going to let them in the door.
- O: Did you have the any blacks that were picketing or causing problems towards the Church because of its policy?
- S: We didn't here. In fact, some of the churches protested when they tried to go into churches and all. That's what they were looking for, to get on the news, publicity. That's the only reason they did it. We said, "We welcome you with open arms." They would let them come one time, and they wouldn't come back no more.

O: You didn't have blacks demanding that the Church withdraw its policy or make threats against the Church or its members?

S: Not to my knowledge. Nothing was ever like that.

O: I'm not sure how to ask this, so I'll just preface it with an experience that I had when I was on my mission in Georgia. Someone basically came up and said, "We love you Mormons, because you're an all white Church." This was prior to many blacks having joined the Church. Was that attitude expressed up here?

S: Not to my knowledge. I've never heard anybody say anything about it, except, I don't know if we ought to record this or not.

When the Church changed its policy on the priesthood, one evening after that, the supervisor came in and told me that her daddy was a Mormon. She had just found out I was a Mormon and said her daddy was a Mormon. She didn't know anything about the Church; she just knew that her daddy was really converted to it. I explained a little bit about temple work to her—in the meantime he had remarried—and I said, "Do you think his wife would give permission to have his temple work done?" She said, "I don't know, but you're welcome to come down and talk with her."

I went down to Sampson County. Before I went, I typed out my permission slip so all she'd have to do is sign it. I went down and talked with her and asked her if she would give permission. She said she would be happy to, that the man really loved the Church. I wrote to Elder Hilton and asked him if he would go do the work personally, and he did. It was so unusual the way that we met. It was another time the Lord had a hand in things. I feel that we were thrown together working together. I had no idea, because her name was not Oakes. I never would have connected her with her daddy in any way if she hadn't found out that I was a Mormon.

O: Do you find that the lessons and the manuals, way back when, or now, were easily adaptable to here, or did you see them and say, "These are only good for Utah, and they don't have any application to us?"

S: Way back, yes; but now, no. Like I told you, when we merged Nahunta, Grantham, and Goldsboro together, we got a larger membership, and we could put the full program of the Church in use. I think we have since followed it down the line.

O: In what ways during the early days didn't the programs apply out here?

S: The Primary program, the different classes it set up in the Primary, we could not have all the age groups that the program is geared for. Now we have all the age groups. Same way with the Mutual Improvement Association. There was no way that we could have the departments that it called for.

- O: The Beehives and the Mia Maids and so forth.
- S: Right.
- O: You'd just have Young Women.
- S: Just us, yes. When I say "us," I'm talking about the parents and the children, as a group.
- O: You would use the Mutual manuals, or whatever, for MIA but everybody would come.
- S: Right.
- O: There was a big issue when President [Ezra Taft] Benson gave his talk "To the Mothers in Zion." I don't know if you're familiar with that talk?
- S: Tell me about it.
- O: The main point was that where possible the women should not work outside the home. That raised a big furor in Utah. What was the reaction here?
- S: Everybody just listened. There was no real discussion on it that I know of, even in Relief Society, like when the subject comes up. I think with our women, most of our women, that work have to work because they're single mothers or their spouse is sick. For some reason they really have to work. Career-wise, I don't think we have maybe three in this whole ward that's really looking for a career. When it comes up in Relief Society, nobody makes an issue out of it. I'll put it that way.
- O: Do women here in this ward, or this area, feel inferior in the Church?
- S: Inferior to whom?
- O: To the men?
- S: No. The men know that they couldn't get along without the women. The women know the men couldn't get along [without] them. [laughing] We would never have had our buildings if it hadn't been for the women. Really.
- O: But that hasn't been a problem?
- S: Ask me another way. In what way? Positions? The priesthood? Is that what you're talking about?
- O: In terms of the priesthood, the women's movement.

- S: No. We got up a group to go to Raleigh to put in our word with our representatives about how to vote on the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment]. No, in no way do I think our women feel inferior to the men.
- O: We've been here quite a while longer than I had anticipated, but is there anything else that you feel that we ought to talk about?
- S: No. I'll rewrite this when I get it.
- O: You're more than welcome to do so. We appreciate you taking time to talk to us. It's been most helpful.
- S: I'm going to tell you another story. I don't remember this. This was before my time. Christmas was a big occasion. We'd have a big tree and everybody in the ward would come and bring presents to put under the trees. My grandmother made a Santa Claus suit. My granddaddy went out to the woods and got this huge tree. That was back in the days when they put the candles on the trees. Brother Folsom was Santa Claus. He came in to give the presents out, when he reached over in the tree, the cotton caught on fire.
- They had a big picture of water sitting up on the pulpit. It had iced over, and this one sister Gore always had her umbrella. Every time she went to Church, she had her umbrella. When Santa Clause caught on fire, Sister Gore jumped up with her umbrella and started trying to beat the fire out, and somebody ran up and grabbed this picture of ice water and came and threw it in Santa Clause face. H's says, "oohhhhh," and took out the back door, the only door. In a few minutes, he came back, Brother Folsom came back . . . Now cut that off.
- O: You raised an issue, and one thing I didn't ask. I guess the branch and ward would have activities, such as this Christmas party?
- S: All the occasions, we had activities. Halloween, we had a big activity. Christmas, we had activities. Mother's Day was a really big affair all my growing up days.
- O: How about the Twenty-Fourth of July?
- S: No. We never celebrated Pioneer Day until we got over here and got this parking lot and the Primary association got . . .
- O: It's only recently that's gone on?
- S: Yes. When I was in Primary, when we got the full program of the Primary going, that's when we started with the Pioneer Day.
- O: Thank you for your time.